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**Multicultural families in Korean rural farming communities  
: Social exclusion and policy response**

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**Introduction**

Even though international marriages are rapidly increasing in Korea that has been a racially homogeneous country for a long time, they are not totally new phenomena. There have been not a few international marriages between Korean women and American soldiers since the stationing of American troops in the 1950s. Entering the 1990s, international marriages between Korean women and Southeast Asian migrant workers were also increased. These types of international marriages have the common characteristics of being matched between Korean women and foreign bachelors.

But recently the main pattern of international marriages is being fundamentally changed. The greater part of international marriages is being made between the brides from Southeast Asia or China and the bachelors in rural farming communities. This phenomenon is largely due to Korean women's unwillingness to marry rural farming bachelors. With the growing numbers of international marriages, multicultural families are also increasing in racially homogeneous Korean society, and this trend is affirmative in the respect that Korean society opens the door to cultural diversity.

Meanwhile, international marriages produce not a few problems in rural farming communities, which are not ready to take in racial mixture. Many immigrant brides and their children are suffering from racial discrimination and are confronting with economic, cultural, educational, and linguistic difficulties. The conflict between immigrant brides and family members are becoming serious because of the deficiency of mutual understanding of cultural differences.

Against these backdrops, this article aims to examine the reality of the multicultural

families in Korean rural farming communities, particularly focusing on the part of immigrant brides, from the viewpoint of social exclusion, and to explore adequate policy responses to their social exclusion. In detail, this article will answer the following research questions: First, what are the difficulties with which immigrant brides are confronted in adapting themselves to Korean rural farming communities (in terms of cultural, educational, linguistic, economic, and community lives)? Second, in what ways are immigrant brides excluded from the mainstream of Korean society? Third, which kinds of policies should be made and implemented for tackling the social exclusion of immigrant brides?

### **Theoretical Foundation**

According to the UK's Social Exclusion Unit, "Social exclusion is a shorthand term for what can happen when people or areas suffer from a combination of linked problems such as unemployment, poor skills, low incomes, poor housing, high crime environments, bad health and family breakdown."([www.crimereduction.gov.uk](http://www.crimereduction.gov.uk)). Even though poverty is occasionally used as a synonym for social exclusion and is one of its main components, the term of social exclusion is more multi-dimensional one, including housing, education, health and social services. Therefore, social exclusion is broader concept than poverty. Unlike the term 'poverty' that largely means the lack of economic resources, social exclusion includes the deprivation of opportunity to participate in the sectors of social life, politics and culture as well as economy. Accordingly, the factors causing social exclusion are complicated, interactive and multi-dimensional (Silver, 1994). Social exclusion is also a concept including a series of processes that it is originated and progressed as well as its causes and effects. That is, social exclusion put an emphasis not only on its causes and effects but also on the processes that particular groups or individuals are marginalized by economic deprivation and social isolation. In these regards Berghman's (1995) comparison of related concepts through the criteria of static/dynamic and one-dimensional/multi-dimensional traits is useful of understanding social exclusion in comparative settings (refer to *Table 1*). Social exclusion also rises from the causes that the person himself can not control, and therefore the cases that social relationship is shut out by the willingness of the person himself are not social exclusion.

*Table 1* Comparison of the related concepts of social exclusion

	Static results	Dynamic process
One-dimensional (income)	Poverty	Impoverishment
Multidimensional	Deprivation	Social exclusion

Social exclusion is a part of social phenomena. The unit of social exclusion is a society and social exclusion fluctuates in the midst of the dynamic change of society. Particular social phenomena can be serious social exclusion in a particular time, but can not be acknowledged as social exclusion under another setting. Moreover, social exclusion pays attention to the relationships between human beings and between human beings and society, while the term ‘poverty’ is only interested in the relationship between human beings and economic resources.

As mentioned above, social exclusion is multi-dimensional. Most generally, social exclusion can be divided into three dimensions - the economic dimension relating to income and production, the social dimension including the limited access to social services, labor market and social participation, and the political dimension such as violation of human rights and disapproval of political right of particular groups (Bhalla and Lapeyre, 1997). Berman and Phillips (2000) introduce the term ‘social quality,’ instead of social exclusion concept, and classify it into four dimensions of social-economic security/insecurity, social inclusion/exclusion, social cohesion/anomie, and empowerment/disempowerment. Robinson and Oppenheim (1998) suggest the four dimensions of social exclusion - income, employment, education, and health - and develop specific indices to measure them. Meanwhile, Burchardt et al. (1999) classify social exclusion into such five categories as consumption, savings activity, production activity, political activity, and social activity and measure the social exclusion of British households. Bradshaw et al. (2000) establish the dimensions of social exclusion by depending on four variables of income/resources, labor market, services, and social relations and develop indices to measure each variable. The EU Social Protection Committee refers 18 variables as the common indicators of social exclusion and poverty, while they are too complicated to apply to the real world. The Social Exclusion Unit (1997) suggests seven dimensions of social exclusion - unemployment, low level of

technology and education, low health condition, inferior housing condition, high rate of crime, broken family, and poverty.

In sum, the dimensions or variables of social exclusion are fluctuating according to researchers. Therefore, from the practical point of view, it is recommendable that researchers, at first, select adequate dimensions of social exclusion by their research aims, sectors and targets, and then develop specific indices to measure each dimension. Finally, the causes, process, and effects of social exclusion should be analyzed on the basis of systemic and process-oriented perspective.

### **International marriages and multicultural families in Korea**

As of 2006, the number of international marriages in Korea was 39,690 and occupied 11.9 percent of 332,752 total marriages. This number was increased about 3.2 times compared to the 12,319 cases of 2000 in just 6 years, proving the rapid progress of homogeneous Korean society towards a multicultural one. Even though the number of international marriages in 2006 was decreased a little bit, it seems to be a transitional phenomenon that is attributable to the introduction of the ‘visiting employment system’ for Korean Chinese (Korean residents in China). International marriages between Korean men and foreign women were 30,208 in 2006 (9.1 percent of total ones). Table 2 shows the recent trends in international marriages.

Table 2 Changes in international marriages in Korea

	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006
	Unit: case						
Total marriages (A)	334,030	320,063	306,573	304,932	310,944	316,375	332,752
International marriages (B)	12,319	15,234	15,913	25,658	35,447	43,121	39,690
B/A (%)	3.7	4.8	5.2	8.4	11.4	13.6	11.9
Korean men + foreign women	7,304	10,006	11,017	19,214	25,594	31,180	30,208
Korean women + foreign men	5,015	5,228	4,896	6,444	9,853	11,914	9,482

Source: adapted from The Korea National Statistical Office (2007)

With regard to international marriages between Korean men and foreign women by nationality of immigrant brides, the marriages with Chinese women - more precisely Korean Chinese (*Chosunjok*) - were 14,608 in 2006 (48.4 percent of total cases). But

their numbers are decreasing with the introduction of the visiting employment system. Instead, the marriages between Korean men and Vietnamese women were 10,131 (33.5 percent of total cases) and were increased by 74 percent in 2006.

In particular, while many of women from China and other East Asian countries marry urban Korean bachelors, most of Vietnamese women are marrying the Korean bachelors in rural farming communities. The reason why Vietnamese women are preferred by rural farming bachelors is mainly because they share the tradition of agricultural society and the extended family system. The socio-cultural similarities between the rural farming sectors of the two countries make Vietnamese women easily adapt to Korean rural farming communities. In addition, Vietnam has not a strong tendency of religious faction and this helps Vietnamese women more easily adapt to the Korean rural farming communities that are largely atheistic. By similar reasons, international marriages with Cambodian women are also rapidly increasing by 151.0 percent compared to 2005, even though the number was not so big. *Table 3* compares international marriages between Korean men and foreign women by the nationality of immigrant brides.

*Table 3* International marriages between Korean men and foreign women by nationality

	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006
	Unit: case (%)						
China	3,586	7,001	7,041	13,373	18,527	20,635	14,608 (48.4)
Vietnam	95	134	476	1,403	2,462	5,822	10,131 (33.5)
Japan	1,131	976	959	1,242	1,224	1,255	1,484 (4.9)
Philippines	1,358	510	850	944	964	997	1,157 (3.8)
Mongolia	77	118	195	318	504	561	594 (2.0)
Cambodia	-	-	-	19	72	157	394 (1.3)
US	235	265	267	323	344	285	334 (1.1)
Uzbekistan	43	66	183	329	247	333	314 (1.0)
The others	779	936	1,046	1,263	1,250	1,135	1,192 (3.9)
Total	7,304	10,006	11,017	19,214	25,594	31,180	30,208 (100.)

Source: The Korea National Statistical Office (2007)

Meanwhile, as is shown in *Table 4*, 41.0 percent of Korean men in rural farming sector marry foreign women in 2006 and the number was increased 5.1 percent from 2005. Of course the main reason why many Korean bachelors in rural farming sector marry foreign women is that they are not preferred by Korean women. Most Korean

women are reluctant to settle down in rural farming sector because of low levels of income and cultural benefits and the problems of children education. Therefore, many of Korean bachelors in rural farming sector select their brides from such lower level of economy as China and Southeast countries.

*Table 4* International marriages of Korean men in rural farming sector

	Unit: case	
	2005	2006
Total marriages	316,375	332,752
Korean men + Foreign women	31,180	30,208
Total marriages of Korean men in rural farming sector (A)	8,027	8,596
Korean men in rural farming sector + Foreign women (B)	2,885	3,525
B/A (%)	35.9	41.0

Source: adapted from The Korea National Statistical Office (2007)

Among the 3,525 international marriages of Korean men in rural farming sector in 2006, 68.0 percent (2,396 cases) was matched with Vietnamese women. This is because Korean bachelors in agricultural sector prefer Vietnamese women who are familiar with agricultural society and the extended family system. Thus, many Korean international matchmakers recommend Korean bachelors to marry Vietnamese women. *Table 5* compares the nationality of immigrant brides who married the Korean men in rural farming sector.

*Table 5* The nationality of immigrant brides in rural farming sector

	2005	2006
Vietnam	1,535 (53.2)	2,394 (67.9)
China	984 (34.1)	718 (20.4)
Philippines	198 (6.9)	170 (4.8)
Others	168 (5.8)	243 (6.9)
Total	2,885 (100.0)	3,525 (100.0)

Source: adapted from The Korea National Statistical Office (2007)

However, with the increasing number of international marriages, their divorce rate is also rapidly increasing. Many foreign women fail to adapt themselves to Korean society and the Korean family system. The total divorce number among the international

marriages between Korean men and foreign women was 4,010 in 2006 and increased in a steeper rate, compared to the 2,444 cases of 2005 (The Ministry of Gender Equality and Family, 2007). And 90.6 percent of 4,010 total divorces in 2006 were under 4 years of marriages, indicating that many immigrant brides fail to take root in the early stage of marriages. Therefore, the divorced couples of Korean men and foreign women have maintained only the 3.2 years of marriage time, far shorter than the 11.8 years of Korean couples. *Table 6* explains the trends in divorce and average marriage time in the international marriage between Korean men and foreign women.

*Table 6* The divorce number of the international marriages between Korean men and foreign women

	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006
	Unit: case, %				
Total divorces (A)	401	583	1,611	2,444	4,010
Marriage time (0- 4 years) (B)	347	509	1,443	2,178	3,632
B/A	86.5	87.3	89.6	89.1	90.6

Source: adapted from The Ministry of Gender Equality and Family (2007)

Of course a larger part of the high-level of early divorces lies on Korean families' hands. But on the other, immigrant brides are also not totally free from the responsibility of early divorces. Not a few immigrant brides have very little information on future Korean husbands, marry for financial purposes and lack the responsibility on marital life. By nationality, Chinese brides' divorces are on the top by 2,551 (63.6 percent of total divorces), and are followed by Vietnamese brides' 610 (15.2 percent).

### **Social exclusion of the multicultural families in Korean rural farming communities**

Most immigrant brides are experiencing the social exclusion from the mainstream of Korean society and culture. In particular, the social exclusion of immigrant brides in rural farming communities is much higher than those in urban areas, because Korean rural farming communities are well preserving the characteristics of traditional Korean social and cultural heritages, such as cultural exclusiveness, the extended family system, and social homogeneity. As mentioned earlier, there are diverse dimensions of social exclusion in theory. However, as this article discusses the social exclusion of immigrant



brides who live in rural farming communities, main focuses are brought on the aspects of immigrant brides' social exclusion in culture, education, language, economy, and community life.

### ***Social exclusion from Korean mainstream culture***

It is widely understood that there is cultural similarity between the countries in South and East Asia. Particularly, China and Vietnam that occupy greater parts of immigrant brides are expected to share some cultural values, such as the respect for family and the harmonious relationship between family members. But, in reality, many of immigrant brides are confronting with serious difficulties in adapting them to Korean social and family systems.

Above all else, many immigrant brides are short of knowledge and information on Korean culture and family system. Many of them come in Korea with vague admiration for the Korean Way (*Hanryu*), which is far away from the reality of Korean rural farming communities. Also, even though some Asian countries share the cultural value of Confucian heritages, the detailed cultural characteristics of each country in South and East Asia are very different with each other.

Also, rural farming communities themselves are greatly alienated from the cultural convenience and facilities that are enjoyed by average Korean people. Currently, rural farming communities mostly consisted of the elderly, and thus almost all of cultural facilities, including museums, theaters and art galleries, are concentrated on urban cities. To be frank, there is no cultural life in Korean rural farming communities.

Immigrant brides are suffering from the difficulties in tumbling to the Korean family system in rural farming communities (Kang, 2006). Differently from the urban cities that largely consist of nuclear families, rural farming communities orient to be the extended family system. But the hierarchical authoritarianism in the extended family system forces immigrant brides to obey parents-in-law and their husbands. Usually Korean men in rural farming communities tend to be more authoritative than their urban counterparts in treating their wives.

It is frequent for family members to be antagonistic in the extended family system of Korea. Occasionally the relationship between mother-in-law and daughter-in-law is seriously antagonistic. The conflict between family members surrounding their role in

the extended family system is frequently witnessed. Mothers-in-law usually demand their daughters-in-law to be obedient to and sacrificing for family members, whilst daughters-in-law want to be independent from the unilateral obligation to family members. Also, the recognition gap on role expectation is great in most Korean families. While immigrant brides want to share household chores with their Korean husbands, Korean men in rural farming communities are unfamiliar with doing house works.

Immigrant brides are even facing with troubles in understanding Korean food and national holiday cultures. They are not familiar with hot and salty Korean food. Some impatient family members become irritable to immigrant brides' lack of skill to make Korean food. Also, Korean families celebrate big holidays, such as lunar New Year and *Chuseok*. But immigrant brides who are ignorant of Korean traditions are usually becoming highly nervous in treating Korean big holidays.

The reasons why immigrant brides are excluded from the mainstream of Korean culture are diverse and complicated. Of course, even though many of them are attributable to Korean society itself, immigrant brides are also responsible for the some parts of reasons. In the part of immigrant brides, the most important reason why they are excluded form Korean culture can be traced by their lack of capability to communicate with Korean society. Except for Korean Chinese, most immigrant brides are poor commanders of Korean language and therefore can not properly contact with Korean society and culture. According to the survey undertaken by *Gyeongbuk Women's Policy Development Institute* (2006), 82.9 percent of 350 respondents have difficulties in commanding and understanding Korean language.

*Table 7* Immigrant brides' capability of commanding Korean language

Unit: case, %

	Frequency	Ratio
Impossibility of hearing and speaking	14	4.0
Hearing but not speaking	28	8.0
Hearing and a little bit of speaking	248	70.9
No difficulties in hearing and speaking	60	17.1
Total	350	100.0

Source: Adapted from *Gyeongbuk Women's Policy Development Institute* (2006)

The route of international marriages and immigrant brides' motivation to marry Korean men also explain some parts of the reasons why immigrant brides are excluded from cultural life in Korea. It is undeniable that many immigrant brides married Korean men in a rough-and-ready method with financial and economic purposes (Kim H., 2006). They hardly consider possible difficulties in being adapted to unknown society. According to *Gyeongbuk Do's* (2007) survey, 45.8 percent of 3,469 respondents came to Korea through the matchmaking by professional agencies. In particular, in case of Vietnamese women, the ratio reaches to 81.2 percent. However, the international marriages arranged by professional matchmakers are made hurriedly and immigrant brides absolutely lack information on Korean culture as well as husbands. The following newspaper articles well catch up the hastiness of professionally arranged international marriages.

It was midnight here in Hanoi...But after a five-hour flight on a recent Sunday, Kim Wan Su was driven straight from the airport to the Lucky Star karaoke bar, where 23 young Vietnamese women seeking Korean husbands sat waiting in two dimly lit rooms. "Do I have to look them and decide now?" Kim asked, as the marriage brokers gave a brief description of each of the women sitting around a U-shaped sofa. Thus, Kim, a 39-year-old auto parts worker from a suburb of Seoul, began the mildly chaotic, two-hour process of choosing a spouse. In a day or two, of his five-day marriage tour went according to plan, he would be wed and enjoying his honeymoon at the famed Perfume Pagoda in the Huong Tich Mountain southwest of here...(adapted from International Herald Tribune, 21 February 2007).

Immigrant brides' motivation to marry Korean men is largely in economic reason. According to the survey of *Gyeongbuk Do* (2007), among 3,469 respondents only 30.9 percent and 8.7 percent married Korean men by reasons of love and religion respectively. 32.1 percent married to live in a wealthier country, while 11.6 percent married to financially support their family members in maiden home. 1.7 percent married to get jobs in Korea. Particularly, 77.7 percent of 1,483 Vietnamese respondents married Korean men for the reasons of economic motivation: to live in a wealthier country, to support their family members, and to seek a job.

With regard to the responsibility attributable to Korean society and culture, the closed

nature of Korean society to heterogeneity can be pointed at first. Korea, for a long time, has been racially homogeneous and the level of accepting foreign culture has been very low. Koreans, particularly residents in rural farming communities, are impatient to different cultures and force immigrant brides to assimilate to Korean culture unilaterally. Also, many Koreans tend to underrate immigrant brides who largely came from poorer countries (Kim H., 2006). Moreover, Korean culture in rural farming communities is usually authoritative and Korean husbands are not so attentive to their wives, making immigrant brides' adaptation to Korean culture difficult.

Rural farming communities are deficient of relevant facilities to enjoy cultural life. Even social welfare facilities that provide some educational programs are absolutely lack in rural farming communities. It is a matter of course that Korean farmers do not have time to enjoy cultural life. In a situation where family members are in hard working, it is nearly impossible for immigrant brides to enjoy cultural life.

The big age gap between immigrant brides and Korean husbands also obstruct immigrant brides' understanding of Korean family culture. In 2006 the average age gap between them was 11.5 year, while that of Korean couples was only 2.4 years. This big age gap and young immigrant brides produce the frequent cultural conflict between family members. Also, while young immigrant brides are not proficient of handling household affairs, family members have high standard of expectation. *Table 8* compares the age gap between Korean couples and international marriage couples.

*Table 8* Comparison of average age gaps

	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006
Korean men + foreign women	6.7	7.4	7.8	8.2	8.3	9.1	11.5
Korean couples	2.7	2.6	2.6	2.6	2.6	2.5	2.4

Source: adapted from The Ministry of Gender Equality and Family (2007)

### ***Social exclusion from educational opportunity***

Currently, various kinds of educational opportunities are given to immigrant brides. In inter-department level, 'the scheme to socially integrate multicultural families' was announced in April 2006. It includes the establishment of the following gradual educational systems: educating Korean language and culture through broadcasting

programs and the region-based educational system, pre-immigration education for the understanding of Korean culture, education for the improvement of mutual understanding of different cultures, and the formation of communities of each country.

Each government department and local governments carry into effect various educational programs for immigrant brides. In central government level, the Ministry of Gender Equality and Family runs Korean language, children schooling, and family counseling programs. The Ministry of Culture and Tourism manages such programs as culture and art education, culture experience, traditional culture and propriety, and cultural relic's exploration, whereas its regional cultural academies educate Korean language and culture. Meanwhile, the Ministry of Education and Human Resources Development provides immigrant brides with life-time education and supports several programs, such as Korean language education and cultural experience (KWDI, 2006). Each local government also enforces many programs including Korean language, Korean cuisine, traditional culture and living decorum, so as to help immigrant brides' adaptation to Korean culture and life style. Also, computer education, liberal education and technical education like massage are provided to immigrant brides.

However, despite of these diverse educational programs, many immigrant brides can not be benefited from them and are excluded from the right of education. Of course the reasons can be traced diversely. First, education programs are very jumbled up close together and are not systemic. Many of them are just ceremonial and for display. Many of government-sponsored programs are lacking of substance and not helpful for the adaptation of immigrant brides to Korean culture and life.

Second, immigrant brides in rural farming communities can not make time for their education. Geographically, most educational programs are carried out in town centers and therefore a little more time is needed in accessing to educational facilities. Also, immigrant brides are deficient of adequate information on educational programs. *Table 9* shows the reasons why immigrant brides do not participate in language educational programs.

*Table 9* The reasons why immigrant brides are absented from Korean language programs  
Unit: case (%)

	China	Vietnam	Philippines	Japan	Others	Total
No information on education place	78(10.7)	144(22.5)	21(20.6)	22 (13.2)	29 (24.8)	294(16.8)
Lack of keeping children	19(2.6)	58(9.1)	12(11.8)	10 (6.0)	11 (10.0)	110(6.3)
Long distance	49(6.7)	122(19.1)	16(15.7)	28 (16.8)	14 (12.0)	229(13.1)
Opposition from family members	0(0.0)	29(4.5)	3(2.9)	0 (0.0)	1 (0.9)	33(1.9)
Not needy of education	388(53.2)	74(11.6)	13(12.7)	48 (28.7)	16 (16.2)	542(30.9)
Others	195(26.7)	212(33.2)	37(36.3)	59 (35.3)	43 (36.7)	546(31.1)
Total	729 (100.0)	639 (100.0)	102 (100.0)	167 (100.0)	117 (100.0)	1,754 (100.0)

Source: adapted from *Gyeongbuk Do* (2007)

Third, most educational programs attach importance to learning Korean language and experiencing Korean culture, and get into a groove. But many immigrant brides want to work and therefore need professional job-related education. Most immigrant brides cannot afford to enjoy the educational programs for hobby and cultural experience.

Fourth, family members including husbands dislike immigrant brides to go out for education (Kim H., 2006). Korean family members are worrying about immigrant brides' close contact with unknown persons, as there are some cases that immigrant brides are enticed to run away from home to find jobs in urban cities. Also, there are no nannies to take care of babies while immigrant brides attend educational programs.

With regard to the education for immigrant brides' children, the government makes efforts to build the multicultural educational system, to strengthen the education on multi-culture, and to prevent multicultural families' children from being left out in the cold. Following these government guidelines, the Ministry of Education and Human Resources Development adopts the grantee of the educational right of multicultural families' children, their accomplishment of educational goal and adaptation to schools as policy agendas. The Ministry also manages pilot schools for multicultural education and educational program for preschool children (KWDI, 2006).

### ***Social exclusion from language and communication***

Except for Korean Chinese origin, most immigrant brides have difficulties in properly

communicating with family members and Korean neighbors. According to *Gyeongbuk Do* (2007), 71.5 percent of 3,469 targeted immigrant brides are in middle and below levels of commanding Korean language. In particular, most Vietnamese brides are poor commander of Korean language.

*Table 10* Immigrant brides' capability to command Korean language

	China	Vietnam	Philippines	Japan	Others	Total
High	665(58.7)	68(4.6)	50(15.7)	148(48.2)	37(16.3)	968(27.9)
Middle	360(31.8)	337(43.0)	184(57.6)	129(42.0)	110(48.5)	1,420(40.9)
Low	100(8.8)	769(51.9)	84(26.4)	27(8.8)	80(35.2)	1.60(30.6)
No response	8(0.7)	9(0.5)	1(0.3)	3(1.0)	0(0.0)	21 (0.6)
Total	1,133(100)	1,483(100)	319(100)	307(100)	227(100)	3,469(100)

Source: *Gyeongbuk Do* (2007)

With regard to immigrant brides' understanding of Korean language, the Korean National Statistical Office (2005) also suggests the similar result of survey. According to the survey, 96 percent of immigrant brides use Korean language in communicating with family members. But 30.4 percent of respondent Vietnamese brides and 41.3 percent of Philippines brides are confronting with big difficulties in properly commanding Korean language. Even some immigrant brides never talk with their husbands because of the impossibility of speaking Korean language.

Also, even though immigrant brides can roughly speak Korean language, they did not receive systemic training. According to the survey undertaken by the Korean National Statistical Office (2005), 25 percent of respondents learned Korean language from husbands and other family members, whereas 16.3 percent studied Korean language by themselves. Therefore, despite of various government-sponsored language programs, only small numbers (9.2 percent of respondents) of immigrant brides were being benefited from systemic learning programs.

Meanwhile, these language problems of immigrant brides bring forth many troubles in adapting them to Korean society. The deficiency of appropriate communication tool, at first, leads to the conflict between immigrant brides and their family members, including Korean husbands. Without proper commanding of common language, reaching to mutual understanding becomes nearly impossible. Thus, if once conflict is begun, it is aggravated. In practice, many cases of domestic violences are derided from

the absence of dialogues between immigrant brides and other family members.

The lower level of immigrant brides' linguistic ability influence home education for their children. In most cases in Korea, mothers are fully responsible for their children's education at home and pre-school children undergo socialization through interactions with their mothers. Thus, immigrant brides who are not proficient in commanding Korean language can not play adequate roles as the due course of socialization.

The lower language capability of immigrant brides also interferes with their social and cultural lives. Usually immigrant brides are not able to properly use cultural and social welfare facilities due to their language problems. They also have limitation in forming social networks and establishing the solid human relations with neighbors. And this lack of social networks produces the vicious cycle of alienating immigrant brides from community life. In particular, Korean language has complicated honorific expressions and therefore immigrant brides who are unfamiliar with them tend to make frequent mistakes in communicating with family members and neighbors.

### ***Social exclusion from economic life***

Most immigrant brides came from economically less developed countries than Korea. And the main reason why they leave their home countries and marry unknown foreign men is to support their family members financially. Many of Korean men who married immigrant brides send some money to brides' maiden home (Kim H., 2006). Thus, economic matters are very important to most immigrant brides and their economic statuses are one of critical factors that decide their happiness in Korean life.

However, differently from immigrant brides' hope, most immigrant brides in rural farming communities are suffering from economic hardship as well as excluded from economic right like excising property right. Immigrant brides' poor understanding of Korean economic culture gives rise to serious feuds with husbands or other family members. Moreover, the exclusion from economic life brings about the exclusion from adequate level of cultural and community lives and makes immigrant brides lead to be confronted with adversities in bringing up and educating their children.

More specifically, the critical factor that excludes immigrant brides from economic life is due to the generally low level of economic standard in rural farming communities. The income level of the Korean farming sector has been gradually decreased with the



transformation of Korean economy into manufacturing and service industries and the opening of Korean agricultural market. Consequently, the income gap between Korean rural farming and urban sectors is being widened. The income level of immigrant brides' family is only 59 percent of the average income of total Korean households and remains only 68 percent of the Korean households in production. According to *Gyeongbuk Do* (2007), the average monthly income of 3,469 respondents is 1,439 thousand Won and 34.3 percent of respondents are below 1,000 thousand Won. Thus, 44.1 percent of the immigrant brides' households in the rural farming communities of *Gyeongbuk Do* are under the national minimum of 4 family members' households (1,205 thousand Won in 2007), while the ratio in the urban sector of *Gyeongbuk Do* is 36.5 percent. *Table 11* illustrates household incomes of immigrant brides' families.

*Table 11* Household incomes of multicultural families in *Gyeongbuk Do*

Monthly income per household	Frequency	Ratio
Less than 1,000 thousand Won	1,192	34.3
1,000-1,999 thousand Won	1,280	36.9
2,000-2,999 thousand Won	641	18.5
3,000-3,999 thousand Won	148	4.3
4,000-4,999 thousand Won	30	0.9
More than 5,000 thousand Won	23	0.6
No response	155	4.5
Total	3,469	100.0

Source: *Gyeongbuk Do* (2007)

Under these economic conditions, many immigrant brides try to go to work. But in reality, it is very hard for immigrant brides to be regularly employed. According to above-mentioned *Gyeongbuk Do's* (2007) survey, 48.6 percent of respondents are in a position of housewives, whilst 10.3 percent are working in agricultural and fishery industries. 27.6 percent of respondents engage in unpaid family labor. Therefore, the absolute majority of immigrant brides is professional housewives or subsidizes house works. Only 13.2 percent of respondents have independent jobs.

Meanwhile, 43.2 percent of immigrant brides hope to work. But they have very small chances of being employed by the following reasons. The main reason is because immigrant brides can not command Korean language properly. It is not easy for the

immigrant brides who can not speak Korean language to familiarize with their working lives. Also, small and medium-sized companies in the rural sector usually need physical working and thus job opportunities for immigrant brides are limited only to small numbers of service-related jobs. Practically, foreign workers who are employed in small and medium-sized companies are mainly the male persons from Southeast Asian countries, as those companies need only physically hard working. For this reason some local governments like *Gokseong City* in *Jollanam Do* provides English-speaking Philippines brides with an opportunity to work as assistant English teachers in high schools. But this is very rare.

It is the same case with Korean women that the rearing of children is one of main factors of constraining immigrant brides' job opportunities. However, compared to Korean brides, immigrant brides are in a much more disadvantageous situation in protecting their children because of their absence of social networking in Korea. Thus, their job-related problems can be partly solved when adequate government subsidies are provided. *Gyeongbuk Do's* survey (2007) points the following order of responses in relation with immigrant brides' job hunting: local government's work placement (39.9 percent of respondents), support for children nursing (25 percent), Korean language education (13 percent), and the understanding and support from family members (12 percent).

Finally, most immigrant brides can not exercise their property right. In the Korean patriarchic system, it is very ordinary that all family properties are officially registered under the name of immigrant brides' fathers-in-law or husbands. In the rural farming communities that incomes are usually unstable, immigrant brides can not secure their own properties. Moreover, most immigrant brides in rural farming communities are unemployed and do not have their own incomes. Family members also do not provide immigrant brides, who are unfamiliar with Korean economic life, with the right to manage family properties. Immigrant brides, therefore, manage household economy within the restriction set by family members.

### ***Social exclusion from community life***

Immigrant brides in rural farming communities are also very highly excluded from community life. The homogeneity and solidarity between community members are very

high in Korean rural farming communities, when being compared with urban cities. Many immigrant brides show the low level of belongingness to the communities with which they are affiliated. Of course there are some reasons attributable to immigrant brides themselves, at the back of their lower belongingness to community life. Immigrant brides tend to keep out of the active participation in community life, largely because of language barriers and the heterogeneity of culture and life pattern.

However, larger parts of immigrant brides' social exclusion from community life are drawn from the closed and authoritative nature of Korean society and culture. Korea's strong propensity of in-group orientation also promotes immigrant brides' exclusion from community life. Differently from the urban sector characterized by heterogeneity and anonymity, rural farming communities well preserve the tradition of kinship networks. Consequently, aversion to strangers, particularly to heterogeneous persons in blood, is strongly remained (Cho, 2004).

The authoritative nature of rural farming communities also adds an extra weight on immigrant brides' exclusion from community life. Authoritarianism in socio-cultural concept is that all things are hierarchically ordered and are discriminated by their statuses (Baek, 1995). This authoritarian nature of Korean society and community is also applicable to foreigners. Foreigners are differently treated in Korea, according to their races and mother countries. While the whites from Western countries are highly respected, non-White people and foreigners from economically less developed countries are prone to be treated contemptuously (Kang, 2006). It is a good example that foreign workers and immigrant brides, who are mainly originated from Southeast Asia, Central Asia and mainland China, are less respected in Korea. Under this social and cultural authoritarianism orienting to discriminate foreigners by their skin colors and economic statuses, immigrant brides are naturally alienated from community life. Their senses of affiliation to community are diluted and they avoid participating in community affairs.

### **Policy responses to the social exclusion of immigrant brides**

Immigrant brides are being excluded from the overall aspects of culture, language, education, economy, and community life. Of course the causes of their social exclusion are not simple but diverse and complicated. The causes can be traced from various sources, such as social and cultural aspects of Korea, related administrative institutions,

the characteristics of Korean rural farming communities, immigrant brides' family members, and immigrant brides themselves. Thus, policies to confront with immigrant brides' social exclusion can not help being diverse. Of necessary policies, some should be done by central government, while others can be undertaken by local governments. The engagement of the private sector, including religious and civic groups, can be more effective in tackling immigrant brides' social exclusion. Some policies need the active participation of family members and immigrant brides themselves.

Above all else, it is important to establish the right consciousness of the general public and the government over the matters of immigrant brides and to set the ultimate goals of policy engagement. Until now, both the general public and the government regarded immigrant brides as the persons who came from economically less developed countries by economic motivation. The ultimate goal of the policies on immigrant brides has been in assimilating them in the mainstream of Korean society and in preventing the occurrence of problems. Also, a big emphasis has been given to controlling the matters caused by international marriages, because it was believed that many of international marriages are arranged as the means of illegal immigration into Korea (Lee Y., 2007). However, as long as the general public and the government treat the matters of immigrant brides from the viewpoint of management and control, it might be impossible to establish adequate policies to solve the problems. Rather, immigrant brides should be regarded as independent entities and the policies to integrate immigrant brides into Korean society should be introduced. Immigrant brides' distinctive culture and life style should be fully respected. International marriages are not the means to give Korean men, who fail to find Korean couples, the opportunity to marry foreign wives. They are the efforts of immigrant brides to be a member of Korean society. And ultimately, policies should be decided and managed in the direction that homogeneous Korean society becomes acceptable and flexible to multicultural heterogeneity.

In the aspect of policy management, display and event-oriented administration should be corrected. Currently, diverse levels of governments and departments produce large quantities of policies or programs without careful consideration and securing relevant budgets. In particular, while local governments do not pay any attention to foreign workers who have no right to vote, they suggest various kinds of unproved benefits to immigrant brides' family with the political motivation of getting votes. However, the

over-issuance of policies without securing related personnel and budget will give rise to the distrust on government policies and make the feasibility of policies low.

The delivery system of policies for immigrant brides should be systemized and integrated. In the level of central government, diverse departments such as the Ministry of Education and Human Resources Development, the Ministry of Gender Equality and Family, the Ministry of Culture and Tourism, and the Ministry of Health and Welfare are providing immigrant brides with policies or programs competitively. Local governments are also managing several programs for immigrant brides without the notion of integration and linkage between programs. For example, Korean language programs are being offered by several government departments and local governments in similar patterns and contents of education. However, implementing policies without taking root in practices produces only a waste of public money. The private sector, such as religious and civic groups, is also engaging in programs for immigrant brides, competing with the public sector. In the future policies and service delivery system should be coordinated more systemically, and related programs should be provided more consistently through the adequate task allotment between the public and private sectors and between central and local governments.

The accessibility of policies and programs should be upgraded. Unlike the urban sector, rural farming communities absolutely lack cultural and educational facilities. The circulation of information is also very poor. As a consequence, immigrant brides in rural farming communities are excluded from cultural and educational benefits, except for the basic level of language education. Currently, it is most necessary to expand and improve cultural, life-time educational, and welfare facilities in rural farming communities, on the basis of life zone. Of course developing the directly visiting programs to immigrant brides is also recommended. Moreover, the accessibility to information is important as well as geographic accessibility. Introducing the mentoring system might be effective for the improvement of immigrant brides' accessibility to relevant information. In this case selecting mentors among persons in town center and related public servants will be effective, because rural residents are usually deficient of relevant information.

Tailor-made policies and programs should be provided in order to reflect regional characteristics and the demands and intellectual level of immigrant brides. Even though diverse policies are under implementation, most of them are being enforced uniformly

without taking immigrant brides' attributes and related circumstances into account. As a result, policy outcomes are largely ineffective and policies become nominal. In the future it is very urgent to implement policies with the reflection on the characteristics of regions in which immigrant brides live. Policy demands are very different by regions. Different policies or programs should be implemented between the urban and rural sectors. Also, immigrant brides' policy demands are different by their environments, mother countries, knowledge level, and language capability. Policies should take these differences into account.

It is desirable to implement policies by the unit of communities. Currently, even though central and local governments enforce several policies respectively, they can not provide region-based services. Without the consideration on the specific cultural and social properties of rural farming communities, providing the same kind of nationwide policies produces many side effects. Rural farming communities do not have frequent communication with other regions, and thus it is more practical to establish the social networks for immigrant brides by the level of each community of life zone. Language programs and social adaptation programs should be enforced by the unit of community.

Assigning adequate roles between the public and private sectors and between relevant government departments is necessary in carrying out policies. The current diffused system of policy management is hard to achieve intended goals due to the fragmentation of policy enforcement and the lack of coordination mechanism. Therefore, in relation with government level, central government is expected to undertake the tasks of planning, budgeting, fundraising, and developing the programs, while local governments play a role of delivering the programs. Between the public and private sectors, the public sector is recommended to concentrate on the provision of services for poorer targets and to financially support the private sector that provides services to immigrant brides.

Adequate performance evaluation and feedback should be conducted on the policies or programs that are given to immigrant brides. Like most policies and programs, the policies on immigrant brides also lack the concept of targeting aim and level of goal attainment in implementing them. Consequently, performance evaluation on the degree of goal attainment of policies has been neglected and the problems of implementation process have not been seriously considered.

Lastly, almost all policies on international marriages are targeting immigrant brides. But the problems of immigrant brides can not be solved only by educating them and adapting them to Korean society. Their husbands and other family members should also understand the culture and custom of immigrant brides (Kang, 2006). In this respect the current educational programs focusing on teaching Korean language and traditional culture should be complemented by the education for Korean husbands to learn the culture and language of their brides' home countries. Differently from assimilation, integration is based on the mutual understanding between immigrant brides and their Korean family members.

The following roughly enumerate the possible policy responses by the dimensions of social exclusion with which immigrant brides are confronting, following the above-mentioned general framework of policy responses.

#### Policy responses to the social exclusion from mainstream Korean culture

- Developing culture-related programs by the unit of community
- Establishing the infrastructure of cultural facilities in rural farming communities
- Developing family unit programs
- Strengthening the linkage between cultural education and language programs
- Cutting of the excessive emphasis on Korean traditional culture and providing an opportunity to enjoy modern culture
- Enhancing the understanding of the cultural traits of immigrant brides' countries

#### Policy responses to the social exclusion from educational opportunity

- Integrating diffused educational programs
- Role assignment between the public and private sectors (by targeting groups)
- Developing differentiated educational system by immigrant brides' backgrounds
- Strengthening the linkage between various educational programs
- Strengthening the multicultural education in primary schools
- Supporting the education of immigrant brides' children
- Performance evaluation of educational programs and feedback

#### Policy responses to the social exclusion from language and communication

- Exact grasping of immigrant brides' Korean language capability and analyzing their needs of language education
- Developing and circulating adequate language textbooks
- Providing tailor-made language education by level
- Supporting one-to-one language education by linking with social employment programs
- Looking after immigrant brides' children during the period of education

#### Policy responses to the social exclusion from economic life

- Strengthening economy education programs, including property management and Korean banking and insurance systems
- Job introduction (developing adequate occupations and supporting skill development)
- Reinforcing employment education programs
- Improving immigrant brides' employment opportunities and subsidizing the companies employing immigrant brides
- Job creation in rural farming communities

#### Policy responses to the social exclusion from community life

- Raising the accessibility of heterogeneous culture in rural farming communities (holding cultural festivals etc.)
- Creating the mentoring system by the unit of community
- Providing counseling services to family members and developing family integration programs
- Establishing the volunteering and private support system in community level
- Inaugurating the sisterhood relationship between immigrant brides' maiden home communities and their husbands' home communities

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